



white-tailed deer

Odocoileus virginianus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Artiodactyla
Family: Cervidae

Features

The white-tailed deer is a large hoofed mammal, weighing 100 to 250 pounds. Color varies seasonally. The hair has a reddish tint during the summer but it is gray-brown in the fall and winter. The belly is white. The large tail has a white underside. Young white-tailed deer (fawns) have white spots on their back. Males grow and shed antlers annually.

Natural History

The white-tailed deer lives in wooded areas but may be seen feeding far from such locations. It is an herbivore, eating fruits, grasses, grains, vines, mushrooms, nuts, and the leaves and twigs of trees and shrubs. It chews its cud, that is, bringing up material that it had chewed once and swallowed to be chewed and swallowed again. It is active mostly at night and during the sunrise and sunset hours. When this animal is startled, it runs and flips its tail to show the white underside. The male's antlers are shed during February and March and replaced each year. There is a "velvet" covering

over the antlers which provides nourishment and protection while they are growing. After the antlers have completed growing in the fall, the deer will rub this "velvet" off on small trees. The debarking of small trees is called a deer "rub." The male white-tailed deer is called a "buck." Mating occurs October through January. A male will mate with several females (does). The gestation period is seven months and the doe usually produces two offspring. Fawns are able to run a few hours after birth. The female and her offspring may stay together for several months.

Habitats

bottomland forests

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.